



MEDIA RELEASE

City Parks & Recreation Commission Recognizes Two Volunteers at January Meeting

SANTA BARBARA, CA – January 26, 2012

At each monthly meeting, the Parks & Recreation Commission recognizes those community organizations and individuals who have supported projects and programs of the Parks and Recreation Department with their time, treasure and/or talents. On Wednesday, January 24, the Commission recognized two community volunteers: **Raquel Vela Mendoza** for her leadership in support of neighborhood pride and service to the City through resident advocacy and **Annie Marroquin** for outstanding community service in the Santa Barbara community and her recognition as the 2012 Harriet Miller Youth Leadership award winner.

Raquel Vela Mendoza was recognized as a rare and resourceful resident of the Westside community. A neighborhood advocate, Raquel always takes action when she notices something amiss in her neighborhood. Raquel expresses her neighborhood pride through leading by example. If an area needs a clean-up, Raquel will ask neighborhood youth to assist her to pick up the trash and remove the graffiti. Commissioner Beebe Longstreet first remembers meeting Raquel over 20 years ago when she was sweeping the footbridge near their neighborhood. Raquel's can-do attitude and enthusiasm are infectious, pushing other residents to help make positive changes, too.

Raquel served on the Westside Community Center Advisory Committee from July 1997 until its dissolution in November 2010. She was an outspoken advocate at the meetings, speaking frankly about resident issues. Through this committee, she offered to cook the annual Holiday posole dinner and for many years served over 70 families at the celebration and gift giving. She also assisted with neighborhood block parties, food distributions, and the salsa festival. Raquel went on to serve on the Neighborhood Advisory Council from April 2011 through December 2011, citing in her resignation that it was time for the next generation to participate and advise on the health and safety of local neighborhoods. The Commission and the Mayor recognized Raquel (and her Chihuahua Amber) for her outstanding support of neighborhood activities and her many years of service working to improve the lives of children and families in Santa Barbara, particularly the Westside community.

Each year, high school seniors submit applications, with letters of recommendation and an essay, to the Downtown Organization for the opportunity to be recognized as an outstanding youth leader with outstanding community service for the Harriet Miller Youth Leadership Award. Each of the applicants must demonstrate that community service is an important aspect of their lives and must also demonstrate that they are impacting their peers as community youth leaders.

This year, the Downtown Organization bestowed that honor on **Annie Marroquin**. Annie demonstrated that she is an outstanding youth leader, serving as the President in over three on-campus clubs; serving on her high school's Site Council and volunteering for over eight different community organizations, including serving as the Youth Intern for the Creeks Advisory Committee and as the publicist for the

Santa Barbara Youth Council. Annie exhibits this passion for community service while maintaining a 4.27 Grade Point Average.

One of Annie's recommendations stated that she is "... one of the best, exceptionally academically talented Latina students I have had the pleasure of working with in my sixteen years as a school counselor. Annie is a truly mature individual with compassion for others and the environment, with humility beyond words." In Annie's own words, "I believe the most significant part about community service is its ability to bring a sense of unity and belonging to anyone involved."

The Parks and Recreation Department recognized and congratulated Annie Marroquin for her tireless efforts for the community and for volunteering her time to the Creeks Advisory Committee and the Santa Barbara Youth Council.

Photos: Raquel Vela Mendoza and Sarah Hanna, Recreation Programs Manager. Annie Marroquin and Susan Young, Neighborhood & Outreach Services Supervisor. Photos by Kathleen Sullivan.

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